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AUTHOR Mahan, James M.; Chickedantz, Penny
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ABSTRACT

Two questions of concern for future developers and participants in clustered student teaching projects are the foci of this report: (1) How do preservice teachers view the role of the elementary school principal in a "cluster" school? (2) How do classroom teachers react to the preservice teachers and special project components that greatly change patterns and professional atmosphere in a "cluster" school? The Purdue Student Teacher Opinionaire (PSTO) was administered to students involved in three different types of student teaching experiences to measure the student teacher's feelings about the principal's professional competency, interest in student teachers and their work, ability to communicate, and skill in human relations. The highest ratings of rapport with the principal were given by student teachers in conventional programs, followed by those in the Reading and Language Arts Teacher Education Program (RELATE), with the lowest scores given in the Professional Year Program, a cluster program. Five suggestions for principals to improve rapport with student teachers are given. The classroom teachers were generally positive in their evaluations of student teachers and rated the cluster student teachers high on overall preparation to teach in comparison with the preparation of noncluster student teachers they had seen or worked with previously. (JMF)

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Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of Principals and In-Service Teachers' Views of a Field-Based Program and Trainees

JAMES M. MAHAN
PENNY CHICKEDANTZ

division of teacher education
323 education building
indiana university
bloomington, indiana 47401

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FOREWORD

For six years the Professional-Year Program, a field-based project, placed clusters of student teachers for a full year in local schools. The program involved university personnel, principals, teachers, and elementary students in the training of prospective teachers.

Rather extensive program evaluation plans were implemented each year. Every group of program participants contributed evaluative data, identified strengths and weaknesses, and responded to scales that dealt with the "feelings and outcomes" generated by the intense clustering of student teachers.

Two questions of concern to future developers of, and participants in, clustered student teaching projects are the foci here: How do pre-service teachers view the role of the elementary school principal in a "cluster" school? How do classroom teachers react to the pre-service teachers and special project components that so greatly change daily patterns and professional atmosphere in a "cluster" school?

Each question is treated separately. The data for the first question came from student teachers, while the data for the second were provided by classroom teachers at the end of the 1972-73, 1973-74, and 1974-75 academic years. The following reports provide interesting, candid perceptions about elementary cluster situations, important to those involved in elementary education but often neglected in evaluation reports.

Pre-service Teachers' Views:

As an elementary school principal, do you ever wonder what that species of "one semester aliens" (the current crop of student teachers) thinks of you? Do you seek feedback from student teachers on how they perceive your professional performance? They all have strong opinions concerning the way you work with in-service and pre-service teachers. Do you view your student teachers as future prospects for employment or a temporary menace in your school employment? And, do you treat them accordingly? Regardless of how you answered the above questions, many student teachers from one of the largest Schools of Education in the Midwest have been sharing their perceptions of their principals over the past three years through 13 items of the Purdue Student Teacher Opinionaire (PSTO).*

The PSTO is a proven, widely used instrument designed to give student teachers the opportunity to express opinions about their student teaching experience and school characteristics in their particular student teaching

*Bentley, Ralph and Price, Jo-Ann, Purdue Student Teacher Opinionaire, Purdue University Press, West Lafayette, Indiana.

JAMES M. MAHAN is *director* of the Field Implementation Center and *associate professor of education* at Indiana University-Bloomington. PENNY CHICKEDANTZ is a former Professional-Year Program participant, evaluator of cluster programs, and language arts methods instructor.

situations. The items of the PSTO subscale entitled "Rapport with Principal" are designed to measure the student teacher's feelings about the principal. The subscale elicits student teachers' opinions concerning the principal's professional competency, interest in student teachers and their work, ability to communicate, and skill in human relations.

The student teachers in this three-year study were from three programs. One group of student teachers was enrolled in the Professional-Year Program, a year-long program integrating teaching methods courses and student teaching and totally based in elementary schools. The 55 to 77 annual participants were clustered in four Bloomington area schools and were closely supervised by University staff. The second cluster of 22 student teachers was the Reading and Language Arts Teacher Education Program (RELATE) based in one large suburban elementary school. University personnel and the school principal constituted the RELATE instructional and supervisory staff. The third group of student teachers included in the study were 144 "non-project" participants enrolled in "conventional" student teaching and placed in numerous elementary schools throughout Indiana. The number of student teachers per school in this group varied with the size and requests of the school, but, compared to the other two programs, the ratio of student teachers to in-service teachers was very low.

The perceptions of the school principal varied significantly within each group. The "principal's scores" and possible explanations for the wide range in ratings are indicated in TABLE 1.

TABLE 1

Mean Rapport with Principal Scores for Three Student Teaching Projects

Project	Student Teachers Placed	Schools Utilized	Mean Score
Professional-Year Program	202	4	2.31
RELATE Project	22	1	3.26
Conventional Student Teaching	144	25	3.44

TABLE 2

Classroom Teacher Perception of Student Teacher Rapport with Principal

Project	Classroom Teachers Involved	Schools Utilized	Mean Score
Professional-Year Program	42	4	2.66

Principals received the highest ratings from their student teachers on the PSTO completed by "regular student teaching" program participants. On a one-to-four scale (with four being the most favorable rating) principals in the non-clustered student teaching project schools received a mean rating of 3.44. The principal of the school housing the RELATE project received a mean rating of 3.26 on the same four-point scale. Principals in the Professional-Year Program schools received a mean rating of 2.31 for the three school years beginning with 1972-73.

The high ratings received by the principals from regular student teachers are commendable and reasonable. With only a few student teachers placed within a school in an entire year, the principal has a much better chance to get to know each student teacher on a personal level, to observe, interact, and encourage him/her individually. In this situation the principal has sufficient opportunities to converse with each student teacher's supervising teacher, thereby staying "up" on the quality of the student teacher's classroom performance. Also, in regular student teaching, University supervisors make only a few, occasional visits. The supervision of the student teacher is, for the most part, the responsibility of the classroom teacher and the principal of the individual school. This is not to say or recommend to principals that student teachers in special projects will not have good opinions or evaluations of their principals. This assumption is refuted by the RELATE results.

The principal in the school where the RELATE project was based also received very high ratings from the 22 student teachers in his school ($\bar{X}$ = 3.26). However, this principal was viewed by the student teachers as a part of the RELATE staff and his role as principal was modeled accordingly. He participated in project conceptualization and development efforts, planning sessions, orientation of student teachers, classroom observation, and, to some degree, in teaching methods instruction in addition to his regular duties as principal. From his involvement and concern in the RELATE project, he overcame the anonymity that could have resulted from the size of the student teaching population at his school.

The principals of the schools housing the Professional-Year Program received the lowest ratings of the three groups investigated. Of the twelve PSTO subscales, the one concerning "Rapport with Principal" annually was the lowest rated subscale as determined by the Professional-Year participants. Unlike the RELATE school principal, Professional-Year Program principals were not viably included as developmental or instructional members of the program

staff. They endorsed program activities, received all communication, participated in the settlement of school-university disputes, but did not participate in teaching methods activities or supervision of student teaching. Although student teachers were at their schools the same length of time (16 weeks) as in the other programs cited, the principals in the Professional-Year Program schools seemed quite willing to leave the supervision and daily direction of the program participants to the university staff and classroom teachers.

The Professional-Year Program classroom teachers were asked to assess how their individual principal interacted with the Professional-Year student teachers placed in their classrooms. A "Modified PSTO" was administered to the classroom teachers in the Professional-Year Program participating schools to collect these data. The 13 principal-oriented PSTO items were slightly re-worded and the classroom teacher was instructed to respond to these items on the basis of how he/she perceived the experiences afforded his/her student teacher. Although Professional-Year Program classroom teachers viewed the principal's contribution to the student teaching experience somewhat higher (2.66 vs. 2.31) than the student teachers themselves did, the "principal's subscale" still earned the lowest mean score of the twelve PSTO subscales.

The findings of this three-year study suggest some important considerations for principals who assume professional responsibility for student teachers in their schools. Many school districts have a reputation for accepting student teachers, carefully evaluating their performance, and then selecting some of them to be offered a local contract. It would seem that principals who intend to hire one or more of the current student teachers would be very concerned with the image the pre-service teachers have of their prospective building administrator. The following five considerations might be helpful to those principals.

Consideration #1: The PSTO is easy to administer and easy to score. Principals (and supervising teachers) who desire feedback on their effectiveness in working with pre-service teachers could obtain that feedback each semester from assigned student teachers. Faculty meeting discussions and introspection could quickly lead to greater satisfaction on the part of student teachers and probably to more requests for student teacher placements in the school.

Consideration #2: Principals of student teaching cluster schools should be sensitive to an apparent trend for pre-service teachers to perceive the principal's professional performance in a less favorable light. Large numbers of student teachers in these schools certainly limit the principal's ability to know and assist each neophyte on an individual basis. Perhaps there are ways to deal with this problem--a weekly administrative seminar for all the pre-service teachers, a schedule where each student teacher follows the principal for a full day, or invitations to the principal to attend methods classes. Student teachers assigned to cluster settings might also be required to attend all faculty meetings to witness the coordination/leadership activities of the principal.

Consideration #3: University developers of student teaching centers and projects should consider the modifying effects such collaborative efforts have on conventional educational roles. For example, the

introduction of methods instructors, project coordinators, resident supervision specialists, and clinical professors undoubtedly leads to a usurping of many responsibilities and decisions that traditionally have characterized the principalship. If old duties are to be taken from the principal, new duties should replace them. This means that role definitions for all student teaching cluster and teacher center personnel must be thought out, tested, redefined, and consciously accepted. Teacher educators in the past seem to have overlooked the principal's potential contributions to field based teacher preparation programs. Dialogue has centered on the training, performance, and effectiveness of supervising teachers, methods professors, and university supervision specialists.

Consideration #4: An argument could be made that principals of buildings accepting small numbers of conventional student teachers, despite the PSTO data, actually may not be more effective than their colleagues in cluster schools. Why? University methods professors in cluster schools tend to be constructively critical of teacher and principal professional performance. Methods classes often are focused on better or more innovative curricular content and teaching strategies. These instructors are anxious to see the most recent educational innovations employed in the building. They champion individualized instruction, open classrooms, process oriented curricula, values clarification, etc. Pre-service teachers hear that principals should be instructional leaders, group process facilitators, needs assessment specialists, accomplished strategists in change, etc. However, frequently it is impossible for a principal to "do as well as one knows how" in the area of instruction. Budgets must be prepared, attendance areas changed, buses routed, pupil populations balanced, pupil social behavior problems quietly handled, summer programs organized, etc. Student teachers often are not aware of the magnitude of such demands--nor are the guest university personnel. Since the student teachers don't see the principal continuously involved in ideal or theoretical instructional leadership activities in their cluster classrooms, they may tend to submit rather low assessments of the cluster principal's performance.

Meanwhile, the regular student teachers are alone in their assigned schools almost completely separated from university personnel. They receive no methods instruction in those schools; they are involved in no large group seminars. They hear no organized constructive criticisms of the school's educational program. Under such conditions, it is possible that many of these student teachers think less about the principal's ideal role and assume that whatever their principals are doing they ought to be doing--and that they are doing it well. If this argument is accepted, it seems fair to conclude that both the cluster and the non-cluster school principals are assisting and supporting student teachers in very professional and effective ways.

Consideration #5: Are the student teachers stopping to reflect about the professional demands and procedural complexities associated with cluster programs? Elementary principals have demonstrated receptivity to innovation, educational leadership, and a willingness to invest extra professional time when they accept special, sophisticated student teaching projects within the building. Most student teachers, so busy mastering the daily challenges of the classroom, probably do not recognize how much the principal has already done to make their field experience self-satisfying and superior.

Supervising Teachers' Views:

Currently, a trend in teacher education is toward placing many student teachers in one school. These "cluster schools" are viewed as more effective field experience sites because they permit intensive in-service education of supervising teachers, result in a reduction of travel time for external supervisors, allow university instructional personnel access to a large group of student teachers at a time, and provide the individual school with significant additional classroom help for a semester or a year depending on the given project's design.

Teachers' evaluations of these major "invasions" of the building by student teachers are not widely known and have received little documentation. Do supervising teachers feel threatened or resentful when they are outnumbered by student teachers? Do the field-based programs demand too much teacher professional and personal time? Do teachers positively evaluate the professional performance of the clustered student teachers? Do classroom teachers benefit from the cluster programs in acceptable ways? Some answers to the above questions and more were provided by 50 classroom teachers in three schools which for six years housed a field cluster student teaching project. The teachers' views of the benefits and shortcomings of cluster student teaching were obtained through annual completion of a 50-item questionnaire. Supervising teacher opinions are summarized in three tables and in a series of direct quotations. Mean scores represent the combined evaluations of supervising teachers who guided the pre-service performance of 111 elementary education majors in the 1973-74 and 1974-75 academic years.

The teachers were generally very positive in their evaluations of student teachers in terms of personal characteristics, instructional effectiveness, classroom management, general professional qualifications, professional dedication, and ability to inspire and motivate students. The teachers also rated highly the cluster student teachers on overall preparation to teach in comparison with the preparation of "non-cluster" student teachers they had seen or worked with previously. The positive results and items are shown in TABLE 3.

The competent use of specific teaching techniques and instructional strategies by student teachers is a major concern of supervising teachers and university educators. TABLE 4 indicates that the cluster student teachers earned "good grades" relative to most of these instructional skills. In the areas of inquiry teaching, formal evaluation of pupil achievement, values examination and clarification, and planning and implementing lesson closure, the pre-service teachers were viewed as above average--but only slightly above average. Quite favorable ratings were received from classroom teachers in the areas of pupil sub-grouping, organizing and sequencing instruction, employment of varied positive reinforcement techniques, and adaptation of lessons to the level of the pupils. Cluster attention to such instructional acts and skills as these tended to lead to improved teaching on the part of both pre-service and in-service teachers.

Ratings of specific program characteristics as indicated by the teachers are shown in TABLE 5. Weekly planning/communication sessions, teaching clinics, and video-taping of student teachers were rated negatively or of little value. The teachers positively viewed their own contribution to the cluster program. They also felt that the time demand of participating in the program was not excessive. The great majority of the teachers indicated they would participate in this cluster program again.

TABLE 3

Teacher Ratings of Cluster Student Teachers on General Criteria

	*MOST NEGATIVE STEM	MOST POSITIVE STEM
	0	5
How well prepared is this group of STs to assume responsibility of classroom with respect to non-cluster STs you have seen or supervised?	3.4	
Dedication to the teaching profession	3.8	
Personal characteristics	3.5	
Professional qualifications	3.7	
Instructional effectiveness	3.5	
Classroom management	3.3	
Ability to inspire and motivate	3.5	

*The descriptors (stems) for the evaluative continua varied according to the question, i.e. unsatisfactory-outstanding, no evidence-great evidence, etc. For the sake of simplicity, "most negative" and "most positive" are used to indicate the directional intent of the teachers' ratings.

TABLE 4

Teacher Ratings of Cluster Student Teachers on Specific Dimensions of Classroom Instruction

	MOST NEGATIVE STEM 0 — MOST POSITIVE STEM 5
Diagnosing and understanding needs of pupils	3.5
Use of alternative curricular materials	3.5
Use of pupil sub-grouping practices	3.5
Use of inquiry approaches in teaching	3.2
Use of alternative styles of teaching	3.4
Solution of daily classroom problems	3.5
Organizing and sequencing instructional materials	3.6
Use of tools and procedures for pupil evaluation	3.2
Examining and clarifying values	3.1
Constructing sound lesson plans	3.5
Use of varied pupil positive reinforcement techniques	3.6
Introduction of innovative instructional ideas	3.5
Adaptation of lessons to level of pupils	3.8
Use of question-asking strategies	3.5
Motivation of pupils	3.5
Sensitivity to pupil attention span	3.5
Planning and implementing lesson closure	3.2

TABLE 5

Teachers' Ratings of Total Program and Specific Program Components

	MOST NEGATIVE STEM	MOST POSITIVE STEM
	0	5
Value of weekly planning/ communication sessions	2.0	
Value of teaching clinics	2.4	
Value of video-taping of STs	2.2	
My personal involvement with the program	3.7	
My own contribution to the program	3.3	
Time demand--excessive or appropriate	3.6	
I would participate in this cluster program again	4.0	

The teachers rated the student teachers very positively as a group. On preparation, personal characteristics, and teaching behavior the student teachers were consistently rated above the mid-point of the continuum--that is, very positively. Similar positive evaluations were earned by the student teachers relative to specific instructional activities, responsibilities and strategies.

Somewhat lower rankings were characteristic in the evaluation of coordinative and in-service components of the program. Weekly planning/communication sessions between classroom teachers and university staff were rated as having little value. These meetings generally were not highly structured. Although they were intended to be an opportunity to air grievances, discuss problems, and make decisions, they were not held regularly, were not interesting, and did not offer teachers the kind of session or help they desired from the university staff, i.e. consultation and/or in-service help. Some teachers wanted to study methods and materials appropriate to grade one; others wanted

to focus on grade four. University instructors tended to have time to treat only one topic in the presence of all teachers. A common in-service treatment simply was not an effective or valued solution to heterogeneous faculty needs. Over the years, these planning sessions "grew old" and their mean evaluative ratings steadily decreased.

Video-taping of student teachers was also rated quite low. Equipment malfunctions were a constant problem. However, teachers, student teachers, and most university staff members did not have adequate expertise to run the equipment properly and many of the malfunctions resulted from this factor. The teachers and student teachers simply had not retained the knowledge gained from their required 1- to 1 1/2-hour audio-visual, self-instructional course at the university. Because of this problem, video-taping was infrequent and teaching clinics based on video lessons were rare. Without adequate video-taping, sufficient scheduled time for analytical viewing, and free periods for teacher participants, the teaching clinics were nearly impossible to arrange and conduct. Thus, they were of little value to student teachers or teachers. When well-planned clinics based on video-tapes of pre-service teacher classroom performance were held, they received high ratings from teacher and student teacher participants. It was the failure to consummate so many clinics that led to consistently negative reactions.

The teachers were positive in their feelings about their contribution to the program and the time demands characteristic of the program. They felt personally involved and did not feel the cluster program demands on time were excessive. As a group, the teachers felt very positively about participating in the program again. Overall, the feeling seemed to be that the positive aspects of clustering far outweighed the negative.

In addition to the Likert-type rating items on the questionnaire, the teachers were asked to complete open-ended items listing ways in which the cluster program benefitted classroom teachers, the student teachers, and the elementary students in the school. Teacher benefits frequently listed included:

> I learned new teaching ideas, methods, and trends in education as I interacted with the university staff members and student teachers...I was better able to evaluate my own teaching... The program gave me additional classroom help...I was able to work individually with more students because my student teacher assumed so many classroom responsibilities...I had access to new learning materials provided by the university...I met interesting and instructive people...I was challenged to be more prepared and organized so that I could be a good model for my student teacher at all times...I evaluated myself and clearly defined my own views and values.

When asked to list ways this program benefitted elementary school children, the teachers cited:

> The pupils received individual attention and enrichment as a result of smaller pupil-teacher ratio...They were exposed to a greater variety of teaching methods...They learned from two different personalities...They were exposed to a variety of teaching techniques and well-prepared lessons...Special talents and abilities have been shared; therefore, bringing in more experiences and varied experiences...The kids learned to relate to different adults.

The teachers also listed ways they felt the cluster program benefitted the student teachers. Frequent responses were:

> The student teachers were able to view and participate in a variety of age groups, teaching styles, class set-ups and material selections...They were exposed to different classrooms and approaches to teaching...They gained experience teaching at different grade levels...They were able to try techniques in real life situations and gain practical experience...They always had several human resources to question when problems arose...The student teachers found considerable pleasure in peer support, group friendship, and a sense of all being in the same professional boat.

The responses from the annual questionnaire completed by the teachers indicate how one set of teachers felt about the cluster student teaching program set up in their school. The very positive benefits listed by the teachers indicate that such programs have a favorable effect on student teachers, students, and teachers themselves. The results also show that teachers do not hesitate to identify weak points in the program. Components which are of little value are readily revealed. Clearly, the in-service teachers are constructively critical of in-service and planning sessions and urge university educators to strengthen those cluster components. Teachers who participated in this cluster program further revealed that they would participate in the program again. School faculties and university teacher educators who are contemplating the cooperative development of a cluster relationship should find the reported data supportive.